(133)

46 Gordon Sq.

Ap. 5 1913

My Billy.

We went to Rodmell for Easter & it was simply divine. Not sun all the time the garden seemed to be in excellent order & was full of daffodils & wall flowers & pink currant flowers. It is really a lovely place & this moment of the year is the loveliest I think. Spain cannot be better. I wont say even to please you. That I prefer it to Charleston. As I would rather not have Mr Shanks in my garden on the whole - but it is a better place to paint in. I hope to go there again on Sat the 14th if it is really allowable & to stay about a week & to paint. Then J. Q. & I shall cross over from Newhaven one fine day & make our way to Paris We shant be far from you if you get there on the 27th (I believe you have Roger on you at the Hotel de Londres on about the 28th) & I will then let you know our plans. I expect we shall turn up there not long after. I hope

we didn't & shan't do any damage at Rodmell.
I'll try to keep the children in order. We
used your coal of course. That I must
settle with you about later. You
seem to sprout books every where. & even
I rather enjoy thinking I might read
should I feel so inclined. Most people
seem to be away here. Maynard & Lydia
went to Marlborough for Easter. Duncan &
I both had serious conversations with him
before they went. Duncan alone & then
he & I together living the best to put a
spoke in the wheel of matrimony. In fact
Duncan became so convinced of the utter
unsuitability of the project after talking to
Maynard that we decided to tell him
our views. also to make it clear that
in the event of marriage we should depart.
I think it possible this may at any rate
have delayed matters - at least I believe
Maynard still pays a good deal of attention
to Duncan's views. I heard your praises
from Osbert Sitwell when I met him at
Ethel Sands. Has anyone else paid you
any compliments? I suppose so if I could
only think of them. Roger's show is said
so far to be a complete failure. but I think
its too early to tell really. He is very much
depressed at selling lately & in fact it must
be depressing. I hope I shall soon hear
an account of Spain from you. Yours

T. PARSONS 3.2.73

(134) 46 Gordon Square. (1923)

Ap 25.

My Billy.

Our plans have been a good deal changed, owing partly & the appalling weather & the fact that we have all been having colds & sore throats. It seemed too desperate starting on a tour & small French towns & inns in these conditions. & so as I found Julian really prepared not to go now & Quentin was crushed by the prospect of a trip in August instead, we gave up our French tour. The consequence is we are still at Rodmell. I came up to London on Monday & go down there again today. I imagine you are just reaching Paris & I'm afraid there is no chance of meeting you there. When do you return - Roger goes there on Sat. so perhaps you'll see him. But Duncan & I probably shant start on our Spanish trip till about Sat. week. Meanwhile I believe Lemand returns today. so I must find out from

him when he'd like us to leave Rodmell. I feel very guilty for staying there so long. It has been the greatest blessing having it for the children who are very happy there & I hope not too destructive Julian devours your books & Quentin eats chalk in the orchard. I try to keep them in order & forbid rafting indoors sternly or running across your flowerbeds which are sprouting with all sorts of things. I shall see you next week I hope if you return then. Did you get my letter to Spain? I have no news. It is icy cold & wet here & I see no sight never to make any plans for the Easter holidays. They always go astray. It reminds me of our youth. I hear of you at second or third hand via Mary! What is promising that you should write to her & not to me - but then I know what he's like in the art of correspondence as compared to mine. I love all the gossip is daintily dished for you - you have become "sentimental". I hear & see you to-day in Paris a week. I must write to your husband & set news flowing

your VB

(135)

late April 1923
? 30th

Monks House
Rodmell

Monday

My Billy.
I didn't know you were coming back so soon. Well, we should not have met you in Paris anyhow, as we only proposed to be there yesterday. I'm very glad we didn't go. The weather would have been too awful. As it is, the children have been very happy here, for which I feel I ought to be more eloquent in my thanks than I know how to be with my pen. So will you & your husband accept a work of the brush as a token of gratitude? I hope you will spurn it. or I shall feel snubbed. Also I must pay for the coal we have used: & otherwise I don't know what depredations you may not find. I run after the brats & make Leonard out to be a terrible ogre & you, strong capable & weak kindness, a she dragon when roused. in the hope of keeping them within bounds. I don't think anything very awful has been done. Mrs Thompsett says she will clean up after us. I send you a cheque for £11 your share of a cheque from Murray.
We return on Wednesday. Julian goes to school

on Friday. Did I say I preferred Charleston & this? No. Of course you've made it up. So I shall say nothing except that I think both houses suitable & their owners. What company you keep in Paris! I've never met Maria Blanchard, but she knows Roger well. & no doubt he's told her I take painting seriously - Do you think it's true? You had better go to the London Group & give me your views on it. I shall I hope see you this week. I'll ring up when I get back.

I hear you're going to a National dinner at 46 on Tuesday - What a todo that must be. I think your Spring Publication has come out quite well - perhaps a little scratchier than it ought to have been. but I daresay that's my fault - also you say it's not a good impression

Did you know that Mr Sunnis baby & the milkman's baby, both born at the same time, both have webbed feet? What do you deduce? Also that Mr Shanks has now divorced Mrs Shanks & is going to marry the parson's daughter.

Yours VB

(136)

Escorial.

(1923)

June 4

My Billy

I found a letter from you at Madrid yesterday giving me almost the only news I have had of my family at all. I hear from Angelica fairly often but Quentin has hardly sent a line & Julian hasn't written once. I shall return now almost as soon as this letter probably on Friday or Saturday - so perhaps will see me soon after. I'm glad the dress was all right I was afraid it might be not at all what you wanted. But really all the dresses were of the same type, only the colours differed & they were all rather pale. All my own clothes, including the dresses I got for myself in Paris, are now lost! having been left at Madrid yesterday - we shall go back there tomorrow & I hope may find them - if not I shall return naked practically & laden only with pots. Of which I have

bought a shop full. I cannot resist - lovely trunks & jugs at 6d or 1s each. & as I knew I should not be able to I came provided with almost empty luggage. That is now returning full & I've also bought two large baskets & hampers to carry the rest. If only I could buy a mule to carry them I should go back quite happily. As it is I suppose I shall have a terrible time with drawers & porters but I think its worth while if all - but smashed or confiscated - I haven't mentioned either an enormous case full of things from Madrid. partly on Maynard's account & partly Wyndham Tryon's - but also ours - so I shall be set up for some time. Spain is an odd country - that's my mature opinion Of course new countries are always much what one expects them to be in most ways - The looks of the country & the people don't surprise me much except that the

women are more beautiful on the whole. But I think their character is very odd & would take me a long time to understand. We fell in at Toledo with a friend of Denis' called Trend who knew Roger & Duncan. He seems to be an authority on music & on Spain & is not us here. He knows your friends at Granada & also Berenson & he speaks Spanish. We also saw a good deal of the Oswald Sickerts at Madrid & spent many mornings at the Prado. Otherwise Madrid is much the least attractive place in Spain so far & Toledo perhaps the best. Roger returned ill at Toledo however with a bad cold. I dont wonder. He is so energetic that no one can keep up with him when he isn't in bed & the moment he was up he went on a tour of all the churches & museums in the place. He is very much upset by Spanish hours. No possibility of an early start & no dinner before 9 P.M. Even he hasn't been able to do more than drawings & water colours here & as for me I've not touched a brush since I've been away. The only piece

The news I have to give you is that Pamela is enceinte Rupert is very much upset fearing that he will have to provide for his grandchild & that the Diamonds will have to live in great squalor probably. I quite agree with him. The way the young men rush into matrimony but into babies is appalling. I wonder if I shall return & find Lydia on the high road to keep Mrs Maynard. It's a very close subject & you certainly might touch on it with her. Just before I left she had rather a scene with me & really admitted she was hoping for married life & a baby & I think thought me very unsympathetic. What is one to say? I expect she'll get what she wants but Maynard has got himself into a hole. I rather fear I may find the parsleeds together at the Hotel de Londres. Which will be very unfortunate. But perhaps they'll have gone. I hope you will be discreet with Dr. who will certainly want to know all about Lydia &c &c. I will telephone to you on my return. Your comments most very welcome. I wonder what's happening to Duncan's show. Yours VB.

(137)

(1923)

Charleston

Aug 16 1923

My Billy.

Will you & Lenard come to Quentins birthday party on Sunday next the 19th? We shall consider it a great honour if you will. Also I hope you will both stay to supper & we shall be only too happy if you at least will stay the night. If Lenard will too so much the better. We have two spare rooms. both empty - so I hope you will occupy them. Otherwise you always have to depart so early.

Please dont consider this an invitation to bring a present. The little urchin will have plenty & they are too difficult to come by in the country.

I know Mary is to pay you a visit on Wednesday & afterwards to sleep here. I hope you'll have the benefit of it.

If you have any week end visitors please bring them too - Have you many in prospect?

Yours VB

T. PARSONS 3.2.73

(138)

Aug/Sep 1923

Charleston.

Thursday

My Billy.

Would you mind if we came
one day next week instead of on
Saturday? There are several
reasons why it would be easier for
me — one that I forgot I had
arranged to see Mrs Stevens. the Gardeners
on Sat. afternoon; his only free time;
another that the buses are always
awful flowing on Saturdays: another
that really we should much prefer
to see you & not your young
man & I feel we should have to
listen to nothing but Oxford brilliance
if he were there. not but what I
like him quite well. Still we
couldn't really gossip maliciously about
Mary & Maynard etc in his presence.

Judy Stephen comes tomorrow, which is also a slight reason why I had better be at home on Saturday. In case Grace finds her a Duplicate too much of a handful at the beginning.

But we could come next week - if you come on Monday perhaps we could settle a day then. I have no engagements that I know of.

I am inditing a dear old Calm of which I heard for the most part wholesome praises from the parishioners.

Yours
LWB

T. PARSONS 3.2.73

(139) Sept 28 : (1923)

46 Gordon Sq.

Friday

My Billy.

Do you return on Monday next the 1st?
If so I suppose you & Lenard would not dine
with me on Tuesday the 2nd - I haven't
got my own dining room yet I am sorry to
say but I know the keys are going but
that night & I shall be quite alone - unless
you would like me to ask anyone to
meet you. I will show you our old
photographs. By way of inducement.
I return to Charleston on Wednesday till
the following Sunday. So if you can't
come I probably shant see you till the
week after next.

Desmond dined with me tonight. I
told him about your play: he is most
anxious to be producer. I think he would
be very good & he says he could easily
come to evening rehearsals. He wants to
see you & hear the play & I suggested that
he might come up from Dare on Tuesday
or Wednesday week if you could let him

stay the night at Richmond, when you could read him the play & he would discuss it all with you. I have been looking at old photographs with him & we came upon one of old Cam in a superb dress. I think I must have one like it. The skirt is about 10 yards round. You see we're all getting agog about the play. Ludia is on tip-toe about it & is afraid you have given it up.

Could you possibly remember to bring up Aimée with you. Shall I ever read it? It's certainly a complex - but I don't know why.

I have been leading a solitary life here with the Keynes since Sunday & Quentin. I think there's a slightly hostile couple. I feel fearfully guilty at not letting them go to Charleston which they obviously ought to like doing. It seems to me too that Lydia is no longer quite so young as she was. That with of course be fatal. Oh dear. What muddles people make. What a dull life Maynard will have compared to what he might have had. I shall be thankful when I can get a separate dining room but it means moving furniture etc. all of which takes time. I hope to have achieved it by the time I return here again. Do come on Tuesday if you can.

Yours VW

(140)

Charleston.

1923

Dec 25 1923

My Billy.

You ought as you well know to inundate us with so many presents. but of course you do. The caramels which I suppose come from you & Leonard are heavenly - I didn't know such food was could be got in London. Angelica is positively pleased with her doll which is in fact dressed with such exquisite taste that I can't think how you found her - I am almost more overcome by my own life than by anything else however. Not a single word of it's true I suppose but I admit it made me laugh & the pictures are really lovely -

We have spent the most wildly domestic & pandemonic day you can imagine - with presents & crackers & turkey & all - ending up just before the rain began with fireworks.

I can't think quite much want to come over here - but I needn't say you'd be very welcome if you could manage it.

If you want to get back before dark you must come to lunch at least. but it would be still better if you – both – would come to lunch & stay the night – any day & night you like after you get this – The only inducement I can offer is that you might take back some irises & any other plants you would like.

Please arrange anything that suits you. Its just possible Roger may come here for the week end, but not very likely I think unless he's made another miraculous recovery – otherwise no one is coming that I know of & you'd find no one but the Bell family. Duncan has had to go to Tuckenham.

Also would Nellie & Lottie like to come any day? They'd find plenty of society in the Kitchen.

Yours VB

CHARLESTON,
FIRLE, LEWES.

Sept. 27.

This is pure business. I have now had the exact estimates from Wilton's for the two carpets. one size 12ft x 8ft & the other size 12ft. x ~~8~~ 10ft. 3 in. & I therefore give you our estimates which include all costs.

(Design by VB) 1 Rug 12 ft x 8 ft. £38. 0. 0

(Design by DG) 1 Rug 12ft x 10ft 3 in. £48. 0. 0

There is no need to hurry them done, either or both, if this seems too much. As it very well may. I forget what my rough estimate was -

Angus said we were to meet you at Phelps at 7.30 - What pleasure - Wednesday but we accept with pleasure - Wednesday

VB.

Thursday. [24 April 1924]

CLEEVE HOUSE,
SEEND,
MELKSHAM.

My Billy.
I dont know if you have heard of our misfortunes or not - so as I'd very much like a letter from you I'm writing to tell you - Angelica has been ill. She's much better now but it has been rather awful & I am still here as you see - & alone with her & the old Bells. She had some teeth out as you know just a week ago. She & I came here two days later, on Saturday, & in the train she seemed unwell & I noticed her neck was swollen. When we got here she was quite bad. & had to go to bed & have the Doctor. She had quite a high temperature & very badly swollen glands & her gums continued to bleed & be very painful for 2 or 3 days. They were afraid 2 days ago that an abscess was forming in her neck & would have to be lanced, which is very painful & leaves a scar. Now they think that may not happen - She is much better in herself. Her temp. has gone down today in fact she has none so far for the first time. her mouth is healing & her neck not painful.

But she is still in bed of course & will be for another 2 days even if all goes well. While there is still any chance of an abscess forming I cannot go away. so I expect I shall be here till about the beginning or middle of next week. I am so relieved at the moment not to be anxious about her that I hardly realize the full horror of my position! You will. I hope however you may imagine how grateful I am for any news from the outside world. Clive & the children left for Charleston yesterday. I have had to give up my plan of taking both Julian & Quentin to Paris - Clive with Julian & Quentin over in about 10 days time. I shall simply return to London as soon as I can leave Angelica with an easy mind. I hope about Tuesday or Wednesday.

I spend all my days with her of course or upstairs, supposed to be with her - but the evenings are simply the devil. You would love it no doubt - so would Morgan - what a pity you cant take my place. If Mr Bell's chatter could be heard by you no doubt it would become immortal. My unworthy brain refuses to attend - it is not the greatest difficulty that I can keep up a decent show of response. You would

CLEEVE HOUSE,
SEEND,
MELKSHAM.

laugh to see us. We seated
at one side of the big table, Mr &
Mrs B. at either end. After grace we settle
down. Clear soup. That is inevitable. It is
lucky if some one from the outer world has
been seen in the village as that provides
conversation till the cod appears. The difficulties
of social life in the village too are greater
than one would think. For the Mapps,
lately arrived, have as their greatest friends
the tradesmen from Devizes. Yet they must
be called upon & invited to tea - only to
meet other residents who have already called
upon them of course. They refused. So all
is well but these things will happen even
in Seend. Luckily for our conversation at
dinner. Then the magazine club has
been given up. It is a great loss. But Mrs
Birch managed it so badly that no one
wanted to go on. Magazines arrived all in a
bunch & one had to read them all in 3 days
& then no more came perhaps for weeks.
So, as we really could not manage without
some, we now take in the Strand & Chambers
& send them on to other friends but it's not the
same thing.

If I attended more no doubt I could tell you even more interesting details of village life - but a great deal about Lorna's children, two dull brats whom Lorna naps at from morning till night, goes over my head. Dorothy's baby, born at 7 months & only weighing 2½ lbs. but alive & flourishing of course & well on the way to being a respectable Miss Betty Honey - Selina Honey - is hardly thought a decent subject of conversation yet, since for another 6 weeks it might really still be in its mother's womb. However I drag it in sometimes as I don't consider them sufficiently aware of the unusualness of such a minute creature surviving. They would have rather it quite calmly died & talked of it almost as calmly that it's alive. No doubt a coffin was provided for it before its birth, at any rate a christening was ready a few hours afterwards - so there's no more to be said. After dinner we sit in the library I read & cross-stitch. Mrs Bell knits. Mr Bell sleeps & reads the paper. They go to bed. & leave me to look round that amazing room at the family portraits - heads of the children in oils done from photographs by the photographer I should think, photographs made to look like bad pencil drawings. & all the other horrors. Does any one remember the lamp with deer's feet & the animals's skins everywhere.

CLEEVE HOUSE,
SEEND,
MELKSHAM.

When we first came I asked for a thermometer. They were astounded - no one was ever known to keep such a thing. There might have been one in the house when Dorothy was ill. But it had since been lost or thrown away & they could not conceive that anyone in ~~Devizes~~ Seend would have one. Luckily the first people Clive asked, being an ordinary human family with children, did have one & sent it. Then I had to ask that one of the housemaids might sweep Clive's room, as she can still only hobble about & her ankle swells if too much used. It seemed to me a simple request as I knew that there were at least two house-maids & that they would think nothing of it if other visitors appeared & wanted their rooms done. But Mrs Bell grew pink with horror & seemed so upset that I wished I had done it myself without saying anything. However it was arranged though at the same time I was given to understand that it would be impossible to have Lorna's children here with Angelica as they would require a school room meal which I suppose would be the last straw on the many backs of the staff.

The absurd thing is that Mrs Bell is really
of course as kind as anyone could be. She
would I think scrub the floor
herself cheerfully. Its simply that
this appalling servants' tyranny & routine
has become such after 50 years that no-
one dares to break through even the things
which are tiresome to everyone. Our
servants who have been here
40 years - there are still one or two -
are really quite nice creatures & would
soon get broken in to becoming ordinary
human beings if given a chance. But
when I think of Grace or Lottie they
seem to me like a different species.

This letter is not written for your benefit
but my own - as I simply must
talk sense to someone - I may go
mad after a week of it. I don't know
anyhow mad or sane I should be glad
of some sympathy. So do please write
& tell me about any ordinary human
beings - Violet, Elena - even Marcus
would be a relief. Shall I write an
article for the Nation? Being debarred
from the brush I find I naturally turn
to the pen, but it may be a little late in
the day. Give my love to your husband

Yours ever
Vita

T. Parsons 3.2.73